A Campus Support Program for Students from Foster Care

CAREER PATHWAY SERVICES & AMBASSADOR LEADERSHIP

Guardian Scholars Program, San Francisco State University
GSP AMBASSADORS

Leveail
Secretary

Naomi, MSW Student & Former
Ambassador

Zemaye
Outreach Coordinator
ALWAYS REMEMBER
ONCE GSP, ALWAYS GSP

SFSU Guardian Scholars Program
ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION & HISTORY

- SF State’s GSP was founded in 2005 to address the needs of former foster care youth on campus who were seeking undergraduate degrees
- Mission: Create a system of support that will meet the academic, social, emotional, and financial needs of undergraduate students who are transitioning out of the foster care system
- Grew out of a collaboration in Student Affairs - EOP and School of Social Work
- GSP serves 100 students each year, all of whom are low income, first-generation college students, and who would be marginally housed or homeless during the school breaks
- Have served 264 students to date
GSP MISSION AND VALUES

PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE & EQUITY
HONOR RESILIENCE
EMPOWER STUDENT VOICE
CELEBRATE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
ENCOURAGE AUTONOMY & SELF-SUFFICIENCY
SUPPORT STUDENT OPPORTUNITY & LEADERSHIP
BUILD A SAFE COMMUNITY
NOURISH FUN EXPERIENCES, LAUGHTER, & SELF-EXPRESSION
VALUE & SUSTAIN COMMUNITY & DONOR PARTNERSHIPS
GSP STUDENTS 2015-2019 (N=264)

- Females (68%), Males (32%)
- Ethnicity
  - African American (40%)
  - Asian American (9%)
  - Caucasian (19%)
  - Latinx (32%)
- Sexual Orientation
  - LGBTQIA (35%)
  - Straight (65%)
- Mean number of years in foster care
  - 9.2 years (S.D. 5.65)
70% of students graduate (after six years) (higher than nationwide universities and SFSU)

82% of all student class levels continue at SFSU the following year

84% of first-time freshman continue at SFSU the following year
We are a self-sustaining non-profit housed on the SF State campus and raise the majority of funds on our own (~$7 million since 2005).

FALL 2019, COHORT OF 100

This fall, we have seen an increase of 33% of incoming GSP students over the previous 8 years. We've served 264 students since Fall of 2005 and continue to grow.
**GSP Services**

**Intensive Clinical Case Management**
- Weekly meetings with Clinical Case Managers
- High touch model of services

**Year-Round Housing**
- Winter/summer breaks (now paid for by university housing)
- Emergency needs

**Mental Health Support**
- Therapists (independent consultants)
- Referrals to CBOs

**Monthly Social Events**
- Holiday events, Great America, GSP Dance, Sports Day, Graduation Celebrations, etc.

**GSP Ambassador Program**
- Student-centered
- Student-led
- On and Off Campus Advocacy
NEW STUDENTS

Priority on-campus housing year-round each year
Year-round housing (summer and winter breaks paid for by university)
First-time freshmen may be assigned on the same floor as other GSP students
Students may choose to live together in future years (creating permanent emotional connections to friends)

CONTINUING STUDENTS

HOUSING
GSP SF STATE PARTNERSHIPS

EOP: EOP, TRIO
Dream Resource Center
Associated Students
AS Early Childhood Education Center

Office of the Registrar
Financial Aid & Scholarships
Disability Programs & Resource Center

Health Promotion & Wellness
Student Health Center
Counseling & Psychological Services

Career Services & Leadership Development
Division of Graduate Studies
Internship Placement Program

- Began Fall 2014
- Students can earn up to $2000 per academic semester
- Average of 21 students participating per academic year

Annual Job Shadowing Events

- Shadow a "day in the life" of professionals in fields of interest
- Establishes formal, program supported networking connections

Workshops & Partnerships

- On & off campus
- Resume/CV, cover letter, & application support
- Interview prep
- Strategic networking
ENCOURAGING STRENGTH BASED SELF-ADVOCACY

- Students apply to receive a stipend and identify specific growth opportunities with their supervisor
- Students meet with Career Specialist regularly to develop professional goals and process challenges & wins, stress & anxiety, & learning opportunities
- Students build confidence in their professional experience and growth
- Reclaiming the power of non-traditional access to higher-education or career fields

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO LONG-TERM EMPLOYMENT

- Basic needs as a foundational right
- Advocating on and off campus for student opportunities
- A students’ work is valuable - paying for their positions can increase self-worth and provide future opportunities
- Intentional skill-building and growth
How can we better maintain & utilize relationships with partners and contacts?

Despite grant funding for stipends, staff capacity and resources are limited.

How can we diversify job shadow placements to create access for all students & fields?

Many of our past volunteers work in social services, mental health, local government, etc., but we lack STEM contacts.

How can we better prepare students professionally & emotionally for a transition out of undergrad?

Most students express their anxiety around graduating and entering the work force. We are in the process of establishing structured groups or events that better address this need.
The GSP Ambassador Program at SFSU strives to lead, advocate, and foster success for current and former foster youth students through leadership, empowerment, and community building. We represent the power of a by-student, for-student organization.
ACT AS AN ADVOCATE FOR STUDENTS AND FOR MYSELF

UPHOLD POSITIVE LEADERSHIP

FOSTER FORWARD THINKING

CREATE A FUN AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT

PROVIDE PEER SUPPORT AND MENTORSHIP

ADVOCATE FOR SYSTEMATIC CHANGE THAT EXPANDS FOSTER YOUTH RIGHTS, SERVICES, & OPPORTUNITY

ORGANIZE AND FACILITATE WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS THAT BUILD COMMUNITY & ENCOURAGE POSITIVE LIFE SKILLS
First Ambassador Program Piloted with Four Students
Fall 2017 (brainstorm from Blueprint 2016)

Roles & Bi-Laws Defined by Ambassadors
Spring 2018

2nd Staff Member to support (previously one)
Fall 2018

First Ambassador Retreat
Spring 2019

All Ambassadors attend CYC Conference to Lobby at State Capitol
Spring 2019

First Election Open to all GSP Students
Fall 2019

CURRENT ACADEMIC COHORT
2019-2020:
7 AMBASSADORS
2 STAFF SUPPORT
3 TOTAL CONFERENCES
$500 STIPEND EACH SEMESTER
Community Building

- Each Ambassador is in charge of planning and executing their own event based on student input & need
- Peer connection

Leadership

- Peer leadership
- Representation on campus
- Application & election process
- Building personal leadership skills

Advocacy

- Campus, local, and state wide
- Conferences
- Donor relations
- Feedback and debriefs for staff events
AMBASSADOR ROLES

President
Vice President
Secretary
Event Coordinator
Social Media Coordinator
Finance Coordinator
Outreach Coordinator
How can we represent GSP as a whole and include more student voice and participation in community building events?

We are working to improve outreach and inclusivity to all GSP students by identifying the needs of specific students and student identities.

How can Ambassadors balance workload and utilize the experience professionally?

By working together as a cohesive team and supporting each other personally and professionally, we can provide for our peers and for ourselves.

How can we expand advocacy efforts on and off campus?

We hope to improve our partnerships with on campus and off campus organizations so that we can leave a legacy of change.
THANK YOU!
ANY QUESTIONS?

SF State Guardian Scholars Program Office 415-405-0546 or gsp@sfsu.edu